

Minutes of the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women Quarterly Meeting

April 19, 2006

The Ferguson Center, 700 S. 16th
Lincoln, NE 68509

- Meeting was called to order by Chair Irene Duncan at 9:12 a.m.
- Roundtable Introduction of Commissioners
- Agenda delayed history recitation with Jamie Snyder, who would be late due to excused absence
- Roll call by Secretary Vicky Wright:
 - Present: Susan Aguilar, Grand Island; Jeanne Butler, Kearney; Irene Duncan, York; Bernadette Esposito, Omaha; Mary Heusman, Eddyville; Anne Hobbs, Denton; Jolanda Junge-Kuzma, Lincoln; Diane Longo, Kearney; Teresa Maxwell, Omaha; Barbara McPhillips, Columbus; Barbara Micek, Fullerton; John Nejad, Omaha; Betty Reeg, Wayne; Rita Sanders, Bellevue; Jamie Snyder, Columbus; Vicky Wright, Omaha.
 - Absent: Cathy Williams, Bellevue
 - Excused Absence: Judith Beechler, Chadron; Jennifer Gutierrez, Lincoln; Megan Lucas, Bellevue; Kandy Pflaster; Cozad; Kathy McKillip, Lincoln.
 - State of Nebraska Lincoln Staff Present: Liz Hruska, Legislative Fiscal Analyst; Kathleen Dolezal, Governor's Policy Analyst; William Scheideler, Budget Analyst
- Lisa Good, Executive Director gives a brief history/overview of the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women
 - Historically, there were up to 30 commissioners
 - We now have 24
 - 4 commissioners from each of the 6 Nebraska Supreme Court Districts
 - The Commissioners should keep individual policy makers up to date, legislators want to hear from constituents, not the director of the commission.
 - Term limits have already taken affect
 - This could be to the Commission's advantage. Commission has opportunity to educate new senators
 - Commissioners have a responsibility to know the ins and outs of the Commission
 - History of de-funding of the commission
 - Director Good interned at the Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women while in college when:
 - There was a staff of 8 including a full-time staff attorney, policy analyst, communications director, executive director and support staff. There was a state budget crisis during Gov. Kerry's term. Commission was de-funded in 1985
 - Commission was then re-funded a year later, but at only 40% of its previous level.
 - The budget for the Commission has since steadily declined
 - Chair Irene Duncan asked how many commissioners knew about the existence of the Commissioner before being appointed
 - 3 raised hands
 - Commissioner Susan Aguilar asked if we were still being funded at 40%
 - Lisa Good's response is that yes, our budget fluctuates between \$185,000 to \$215,000 annually when we get funding.
 - The legislature will address the budget for the Commission next year
 - The Commission must justify its existence

- Chair Irene Duncan introduced and explained the **Fy 2005-2007 Biennium Strategic Plan**
 - We have begun to partner with and identify other entities/agencies to assist the Commission in our goals.
 - Commissioners were asked to fill out a hand-out indicating what they would like to do/goals to achieve
 - Governor and legislature
 - Legislators suggested Commission was trying to do too much for too many and limiting the effectiveness.
 - Commission should just focus on one topic, commensurate with smaller funding
 - Women and Workforce Issues
 - Women Work! A national organization identified to help accomplish goals
 - Women's Commission has affiliated with the national network Women Work!
 - **Goal One: Establish Smoothly Running Admin Support for the Commission:**
 - Commission was evicted from State Office Building, but secured a strategic location at the Ferguson Center, across the street from the Capitol
 - Welcoming and strategically a good place to be if the Women's Commission can't find space in the Capitol itself
 - Hired an administrative assistant, need to hire a office support staff and move Rebecca Nelms into a research analyst/public affairs position
 - Furnish Office
 - New functioning workstation for Rebecca Nelms and one more person
 - Need a few more office basics to run the office efficiently
 - Agencies can now lease needed items through the State- cost effective
 - Commission has leased 2 computers, and a printer/faxer/scanner/copier
 - Commission pays by the copy
 - Women's Foundation
 - Formed to raise funds for the Commission
 - Did raise funds in the early years
 - Supported Commission through when there were no state dollars.
 - Status of Foundation unknown at this time – lacking leadership
 - Foundation was originally in charge of selling sower pins and t-shirts
 - What to do with this merchandise since Foundation status is unknown
 - Pins were being sold at Commission and at State Capitol, now in a holding pattern.
 - Sower pin history – done by same artist that did male sower on top of Capitol (Lee Lowry)

By-Laws of the Commission were presented:

- There are attendance requirements
 - Commissioners were asked by Chair Duncan to please make a commitment
- Cooperation between Commissioners and their employers is necessary.
- Commissioners can receive reimbursement for

- Mileage
 - Hotel/motel expenses
 - Meals
- Commission staff will get state reimbursement forms to Commissioners to fill in and submit.
- Six committees in statute
 - If a Commissioner has a particular passion or interest please indicate that on the committee sign up forms as well as willingness to serve as chair of committee
 - Commissioner Esposito: there is nothing in the notebooks about the Education Committee.
 - Director Good will provide information about the Education Committee and send it out, but this would be just an example . We have an opportunity now for Commissioners to shape their committee, as committees determine their own goals.
- **Goal 2 Commissioner Appointments**
 - Director Good and Executive Committee visited with Governor and Staff regarding commission vacancies
 - Chair Duncan stated she does not know who recommended Commissioners, this was an area where the Governor's office was very active
 - Commission still needs 1 appointment from each district 5 & 6
 - Not more than ½ of the Commissioners may be from the same political party
- **Goal 3 Focus Program Activities**
 - WomenWork was a natural partner
 - Commission must also collaborate with other organizations, agencies. If Commissioners know of other agencies, inform Commission staff
 - Commission worked with Senator Beutler's office on a minimum wage increase for Nebraska (bill failed)
 - Delegates from Nebraska WomenWork just returned from the national WomenWork conference in D.C, where they also attended a minimum wage rally.
 - New Priority Issues for the Commission are:
 - Women and work
 - Promoting Non-traditional work for women
 - Women of Distinction
 - Pluralized it to honor more women
 - Women of Distinction in conjunction with Equality Day (Aug. 26)
 - Many women's organizations were doing something in March for Women's History Month, so seemed like a good idea to align Commission event with another day
 - Statute says do this recognition annually
- DeVoted Project
 - DeVoted is putting on a Play about the suffrage movement in Nebraska

- This Play is traveling all over the State
 - Handouts from Chair Duncan
 - Reasons women should vote
 - Stat sheet on women and wages
 - "Ten reasons why the great majority of women do not want the ballot"
 - Women's suffrage: A Nebraska history
 - Being a commissioner
- Women's Legal Rights Handbook
 - Needs updating
 - Women under the Law committee responsibility
 - Duncan explained we need to get these out and take them to communities, libraries, and organizations.
- **Goal Four: Identify and provide information concerning policies that impact women**

Policy Impact Grant activities. Funds and survey have been implemented.

 - American Association of University Women (AAUW)
 - NeW Voices and Votes Campaign
 - Pat Funk is our contact for AAUW
 - Pat is a statistician and can crunch data
 - Survey has been written for Women in the work place
 - Open ended to include working women 18 and above (no cut off for retirement age, since many Nebraska women have to work past retirement age)
 - Take to town meetings, various organizations, senior centers
 - Will be posted on-line
- Develop active relationship with senators and staff
 - Term limits means starting over with new senators and staff, and providing factual, accurate and meaningful assistance to new senators.
 - Utilize not only relationship with State senators and staff, but also with city and county government and national officials.
- White House project
 - Getting women registered to vote/run for office
 - Ready to Run: the actual ins and outs of running for public office
- Develop a relationship with our Nebraska Congressmen
 - In D.C. the Women Work Nebraska delegation visited Nelson and Hagel's offices and spoke with Jeff Fortenberry and Lee Terry.
- Think Nationally because this trickles down to the local levels.
 - Other state Commissions on the Status of Women are being eyed critically for cuts
 - Senators really want to see and hear from Commissioners, not the director, who can fill in if you are not able to be there in person. How to contact your rep:
 - Testimonials
 - Letter writing
 - Provide Senators with information
 - This allows Commission to be a resource for information and research
 - Commission has to be credible, quick, and accurate
- **Agenda readjusted to address Jamie Snyder's wrap up of Commission History**
 - Commissioner J. Snyder is Ex-Officio and has been on Commission since 2000
 - Has been a tumultuous last two years
 - Commission movement began in 60's by Kennedy

- State and Local Commissions
 - In NE State law since the 70's
- Used to put out a newsletter and kept track of many activities
 - Director at that time was Rose Meile, a legend
- Commission lost funding
 - The Women's Foundation kept Commission on life support
- Snyder says Commission is on good ground and has an opportunity to form a good strategic plan
 - Commission needs to have a project or two going
- Government Board and Commissions
 - Publication that gives outline of Agencies/Organizations in the state
 - Handout of Nebraska Boards and Commissions open positions
 - Commission can be found on pg 6
 - Commission is a non-code agency
 - This means Governor doesn't appoint the Executive Director
 - Commission is an advocacy commission
 - Many women work for the state in clerical positions that don't pay well.
- Women's work has value, and we must promote this concept.
 - Women in Nebraska are represented very poorly in professional/managerial occupations, or, ranked 49th in the nation. Is not good, we have a glass ceiling here.
- Minutes of Jan. 25, 2006 quarterly meeting
 - Chair Duncan – dispense with the reading
 - Commissioner Junge-Kuzma Duncan noted the date on minutes of that meeting needs to be changed from 2005 to 2006
 - Ex-Officio Snyder moved to accept the minutes with the date correction
 - Commissioner Junge-Kuzma seconded the motion and motion carried.

Budget Review

Legislative Fiscal Analyst Liz Hruska explained the reduction of the commission budget by \$30,000 for this fiscal year was approved by the legislature.

Treasurer John Nejad (the "J" is pronounced) and William Scheideler, Budget Analyst for the State of Nebraska presented:

- Fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30
- budget sheet handout
 - Personal services
 - These things include salaries, insurance, etc
 - Spent \$49,088. Still have \$16,288 left, should be in good shape.
 - Operating Expenses
 - Standard office needs
 - Commission can't exceed what has been put aside for salary requirements
- The \$30,000 taken from the Appropriations Board of the Legislature is not reflected in the budget handout yet
- Motion to approve the budget
 - Commissioner Junge-Kuzma moved to approve
 - Commissioner Susan Aguilar seconded
 - Motion carried
- Review of Statutes and By-Laws that govern Nebraska Commission on the Status of Women
 - Done by Rebecca Nelms, Administrative Assistant

- Went over governing Statutes first
 - Caveat: Commission is unique given that it was de-funded but not wiped off the books. Talked with Commission's attorney at the Attorney General's office (Lynn Melson). Ms. Melson informed Rebecca to interpret the "shall" language as discretionary rather than directory. If the Commission is not able to hold elections at the proper statutory time, the Commission has the discretion to do it as soon as possible after that.
 - § 81-8,258 states that the Commission shall elect officers at the second quarterly meeting
 - Given the de-funded status of the Commission, the Commission elected officers as soon as possible after the second quarterly meeting.
 - These officers have not yet served their full one year term as laid out in the Commission's governing by-laws
 - Officers will remain in their elected positions until the next second quarterly meeting in 2007.
 - § 81-8,259 states that the Commission shall select a nominating committee (for purposes of reporting a slate of nominees for each elective office) at the first quarterly meeting (this would have been the January meeting, before new Commissioners appointed).
 - Same path as officer elections is suggested
 - Put together nominating committee as soon as possible
- Presentation by Rebecca Nelms, Admin Assistant regarding Commission By-Laws:
 - By-Laws are mostly a reiteration of governing statutes
 - Expands on rules for officers, chairs of committees, and commissioners
 - Duties of each
 - Expands on statutorily required quarterly meetings
 - Also talks about committee meetings
 - Discussion of voting
 - Commission uses *Robert's Rules of Order* during meetings
 - Discussion of how to amend by-laws
- Recap of Legislative Action for this session
 - Bills of concern for the Commission
 - LB 239 – passed over Governor's veto
 - LB 511 – died in committee
 - LB 554 – died on General File
 - LB 561 – died in committee
 - LB 661 – died in committee
 - LB 842 – died in committee
 - LB 886 – died in committee
 - LB 1016 – died in committee
 - LB 1070 – died in committee
 - LR12CA – will appear on ballot as Amendment One
 - LR13CA – died in committee
 - Accomplishment of Legislature this session
 - Handout of an Omaha World Herald Article entitled "Major accomplishments of the 2006 Nebraska Legislature"
 - Article published on 4/14/06

- **Report of current projects and upcoming events**

- Women of Distinction
 - To take place August 25th
 - Chaired last year by Commissioner Kathy McKillip (V-Chair)
 - How many awards to give out
 - Commission determination
 - Commissioner Heusman – proposed idea to have one woman who exemplifies each category of standing committees
- Equal Pay Day – April 25th
 - Commission has nothing scheduled
- Smart Women, Smart Money conference
 - Hosted by State Treasurer's Office
 - Maybe next year help gear it more towards those women who are struggling financially, as opposed to women who are already business and professional women.
- Upcoming events
 - National Association of Commissions for Women convention will be held In Lincoln, Nebraska July 19-22.
 - President of NACW – Bonnie Coffey, the Lincoln/Lancaster Women's Commission Director
 - Flier for the Convention was passed out, and commissioners asked to consider attendance for all days, or one day.
 - Chutes & Ladders
 - Public Policy Director for Women Work! Katherine Reilly will be in Lincoln talking about the Chutes & Ladders report on April 22, 2006.
 - Handout of flier for Chutes & Ladders presentation
 - Calendar of Events
 - Check the website often
 - DeVoted
 - Need Commissioners to attend performances around the State
 - Possibility of partnering with the NE State Historical Society
 -
- Announcement by Commissioners John Nejad and Vicky Wright that the next meeting will be July 12th at the College of Saint Mary in Omaha.

Being no other business or announcements, the meeting was adjourned at 1:39 p.m.

Submitted by:
Vicky Wright